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The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003

The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/57/L.20

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

I. Introduction

1. At its fifty-sixth session, the General Assembly authorized the continuation of the provision of resources for two staff members (one Professional, P-4 level, and one General Service, other level) for 2002 in support of the Central American peace process, pursuant to its resolution 56/224. The current proposals reflect the maintenance in 2003 of those resources authorized for 2002.

II. Draft resolution A/57/L.20

A. Request contained in the draft resolution

2. Under the terms of operative paragraphs 15 and 19 of draft resolution A/57/L.20, the General Assembly would, inter alia:

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(a) Request the Secretary-General, the relevant bodies and programmes of the United Nations system and the international community to continue to support and verify the implementation of the Guatemala peace agreements, signed under United Nations auspices, and to consider the implementation of the peace agreements as the framework for their technical and financial assistance programmes and projects in the context of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Guatemala;

(b) Request the Secretary-General to continue to lend his fullest support to the initiatives and activities of the Central American Governments, particularly their efforts to consolidate democracy through the promotion of integration and the implementation of the comprehensive sustainable development programme, emphasizing, inter alia, the potential repercussions of natural disasters on the vulnerable economies and political systems of the region, and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session on the implementation of the resolution.

B. Relationship of the proposed request to the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005

3. The above request relates to subprogramme 1 (Prevention, control and resolution of conflicts) of programme 1 (Political affairs) of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 (see A/55/6 (Prog. 1)).

C. Activities by which the proposed request would be implemented

4. Should the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution, the Secretary-General would, with respect to the requests outlined above:

(a) Continue to provide good offices, as required, as well as substantive support and political guidance, to the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) in the fulfilment of its mandate;

(b) Continue to follow closely the situation in Central America with the aim of overcoming the underlying causes of conflict, avoiding setbacks and consolidating peace and democracy in the region. This follow-up would be conducted in full cooperation with the United Nations resident coordinator for El Salvador, who is also the representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the area;

(c) Continue to lend full support to the initiatives and activities of the Central American Governments, particularly in their efforts to consolidate peace and democracy.

D. Requirements at full cost

5. Post-conflict peace-building is at the core of the activities performed by the Department of Political Affairs, and by the United Nations at large, with regard to Central America. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central America (A/57/384) and other recent reports (A/56/1003, A/57/336 and

A/57/584), the United Nations continues to play an active role in the peace process in Central America.

6. The comprehensive recovery plan undertaken by the United Nations system in the aftermath of hurricane Mitch (October 1998) continues to lay the groundwork for sustainable development and the prevention of future disasters. Still suffering the effects of hurricane Mitch, Central America has in recent years been hit repeatedly by the vagaries of nature. The entire region has suffered food shortages and hunger as a result of continuing drought. In 2001, El Salvador was hit by a series of earthquakes, which cost the country over 1.5 million homes. Later that year, hurricane Michelle hit Honduras. Dealing with the impact of these natural disasters requires the international community's continued commitment to ensure that rehabilitation and preventive efforts contribute to the consolidation of peace and development in the Central American region.

7. The peace agreements signed in Guatemala in 1996 provided the basis for the mandate entrusted by the General Assembly to MINUGUA, namely, verification, good offices, advisory services and public information. MINUGUA, together with the other parts of the United Nations system and the international community at large, has also played a leading role in a multifaceted exercise in peace-building. Important challenges lie ahead, and delays have been experienced in the implementation of the peace agreements. Throughout 2002, the human rights situation in Guatemala has required continued verification of alleged abuses and analysis of their implications for society and the overall process.

8. In El Salvador, the Department of Political Affairs remains committed to supporting the consolidation of the peace-building process, in full cooperation with UNDP. It would continue to work with Salvadoran authorities and national institutions to consolidate the gains of peace and to ensure the country's democratic transition.

9. In order to provide adequate support for all the Secretary-General's efforts in Central America, particularly in Guatemala, the Secretariat will need resources to continue financing a Professional post (P-4 level) and a General Service post.

10. The political affairs officer (P-4) would be primarily assigned to monitor the Guatemalan peace process and to provide backstopping and political guidance for MINUGUA post-conflict peace-building activities. When necessary, that officer would also follow up operational, personnel and financial matters pertaining to MINUGUA. In addition, the officer would brief and distribute information to missions, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations currently interested in the Guatemala peace process.

11. Regarding El Salvador, the political affairs officer would assist in the joint UNDP/Department of Political Affairs efforts to follow up the consolidation of the country's democratic transition, in particular the institutions that grew out of the peace process.

12. In the case of Central America at large, the political affairs officer would follow up developments in the region as a whole. When necessary, the officer would attend meetings of the United Nations inter-agency task force for the reconstruction and transformation of Central America, and would coordinate activities with field offices of the United Nations system, as appropriate.

13. The General Service staff member would provide research assistance, administrative backstopping and secretarial support for the above-mentioned activities.

14. The estimated costs relating to the salaries and common staff costs for those two staff members for 2003 would amount to $202,800 net ($244,200 gross). A review of the expenditures relating to these staff members in support of the Central American peace process in 2002 indicates that, out of a total of $188,500 appropriated for 2002, an estimated $19,900 is expected to remain unencumbered at the end of the year. After taking that balance into account, the overall additional requirements for the two staff members for a one-year period from 1 January to 31 December 2003 amount to $182,900 net ($224,300 gross).

III. Action required from the General Assembly

15. Should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/57/L.20, additional provisions in the amount of $182,900 would be required under section 3, Political affairs, of the programme budget for 2002-2003. Furthermore, an amount of $41,400 would be required under section 32, Staff assessment, to be offset by a corresponding amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment.

16. **By its resolution 56/254 A, the General Assembly appropriated $98,338,700 for special political missions under section 3, Political affairs, of the programme budget for 2002-2003. As that provision has been more than fully allocated for operations approved by the General Assembly or the Security Council, the additional requirements of $182,900 net ($224,300 gross) that would arise should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/57/L.20 would have to be treated under the procedures provided for in paragraph 11 of annex I to resolution 41/213. Accordingly, additional appropriations in the amounts outlined in paragraph 15 above would be required for the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003.**